

BYE-LAW - Student Voice and Democratic Participation



How students shape the future of UWS Students' Union

Welcome

UWS Students' Union exists to ensure that every student has the opportunity to shape their education, influence decisions and contribute to a strong, inclusive and democratic community.

This Bye-Law sets out the principles, structures and democratic processes that support student voice and participation within the Students' Union. It has been developed following the Students' Union's Democracy Review and reflects our commitment to creating a democratic framework that is accessible, inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of our students.

Student voice is about more than attending meetings or voting in elections. It is about creating meaningful opportunities for students to raise ideas, work together, influence change and hold the Students' Union to account.

The Student Voice Framework recognises that students engage in different ways. Some will represent their classmates, others will lead campaigns, build communities, develop ideas through Student Networks or societies, or contribute through Faculty Forums, Campus Forums and Working Groups. Every form of participation has value and contributes to a stronger Students' Union.

This Bye-Law should be read in conjunction with the [Memorandum and Articles of Association](#) and provides the constitutional framework for student voice and democratic participation within UWS Students' Union.

Part 1 – Our Democratic Principles

Our democratic structures are guided by the following principles.

1. Student-led

Students should have genuine opportunities to shape the work and direction of their Students' Union.

2. Turning Ideas into Action

Participation should lead to meaningful action, with students able to see how their ideas influence decisions and bring about change.

3. Representation that Reflects Our Community

Our democratic structures should reflect the diversity of the UWS student community and ensure that a broad range of voices are heard.

4. Equality and Inclusion

Every student should have an equal opportunity to participate, with barriers to engagement actively identified and addressed.

5. Community and Belonging

Student voice should strengthen connections between students, their Students' Union and the wider University community.

6. Partnership

We work constructively with the University while remaining an independent organisation that represents and champions the interests of students. The Student Voice Framework supports the shared commitment to partnership set out in the UWS Student Partnership Agreement, recognising that students should be active partners in shaping their education, the wider student experience and the future development of the University.

7. Accessibility

Student voice should be flexible and accessible, enabling participation regardless of campus, mode of study or personal circumstances.

8. Respect

We value respectful debate, constructive challenge and the sharing of different perspectives.

9. Transparency and Accountability

Students should understand how decisions are made and how their views have influenced the work of their Students' Union.

10. Continuous Improvement

Our democratic structures will evolve in response to student feedback, participation and changing needs.

Part 2 – Our Student Voice Framework

The Student Voice Framework brings together a range of connected opportunities for students to influence the work of the Students' Union and the University.

The Framework is designed to ensure that ideas raised by students are developed, considered and acted upon in a clear and transparent way. Students can raise issues individually or collectively through any part of the Framework. Ideas may be developed into recommendations, campaigns, projects or, where appropriate, proposals for Students' Union policy.

The Executive Committee is responsible for coordinating the Framework, considering recommendations from across the Student Voice structures and ensuring that agreed actions are progressed. Decisions on Students' Union policy remain with Members through the Annual Student

Members' Meeting or other democratic processes provided for in the [Memorandum and Articles of Association](#).

For the purposes of this Bye-Law, references to "Members" or "Membership" mean Student Members of the Students' Union, as defined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association, unless otherwise stated.

The Student Voice Framework is made up of the following connected structures:

Structure	Purpose
Annual Student Members' Meeting	The Union's highest democratic decision-making body, where Members determine policy and hold elected representatives to account.
Student Members' Meetings	Meetings that enable Members to discuss significant issues and exercise the powers provided in Part 3 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.
Executive Committee	Coordinates the Student Voice Framework and implements the policies agreed by Members.
Faculty Forums	Bring students together to improve the academic experience within each Faculty.
Campus Forums	Provide opportunities for students to shape campus life and local priorities.
Student Networks	Bring together students with shared identities or experiences to champion equality, build community and influence change.
Societies Forum	Supports collaboration between affiliated societies and strengthens student-led activity.
Working Groups	Develop ideas, projects and campaigns on specific issues or priorities.

Part 3 – Our Student Voice Structures

1. Framework Provisions

Purpose

The Student Voice Framework provides the structures through which Members influence the work of the Students' Union and the University.

Student Voice Bodies

For the purposes of this Bye-Law, the following forums and formal meetings through which the Student Voice is heard are collectively referred to as the “Student Voice Bodies”: the Annual Student Members’ Meeting, Student Members’ Meetings, Executive Committee, Faculty Forums, Campus Forums, Student Networks, Societies Forum and Working Groups.

Participation

Unless otherwise stated, all Members may participate in Student Voice activities established under this Bye-Law.

The Students' Union will take reasonable steps to remove barriers to participation and ensure that opportunities to engage are accessible and inclusive.

Meetings may be held in person, online or in a hybrid format. University staff or external guests may attend where appropriate to provide information, advice or support.

Developing Ideas and Proposals

Members and Student Voice bodies may develop ideas and recommendations, individually or through any Student Voice body, to improve the student experience or the work of the Students' Union.

The Executive Committee shall consider recommendations and determine how they should be progressed. This may include:

- suggesting improvements to improve the student experience;
- referring matters to another Student Voice body or Working Group;
- making recommendations to the University or Board of Trustees; or
- referring proposals requiring Students' Union policy to an Annual Student Members’ Meeting or another democratic process provided for in Part 3 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Students' Union will provide feedback on recommendations wherever reasonably practicable.

Governance

Student Voice bodies should seek to resolve differences through respectful discussion, collaboration and decision making in accordance with this Bye-Law.

A vacancy within any Student Voice body shall not invalidate its business or decisions, provided that any meeting remains quorate.

Where this Bye-Law does not prescribe a procedure, the Executive Committee may determine an appropriate process that is consistent with this Bye-Law, the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Union's Democratic Principles.

Any dispute regarding the interpretation of this Bye-Law shall be determined by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

2. Our Student Voice Structures

2.1. Annual Student Members' Meeting

Purpose

The Annual Student Members' Meeting is the highest democratic decision-making body of the Students' Union. It brings together Members to determine the Union's policies, priorities and direction, and to hold elected representatives to account and exercise the powers reserved to Members in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Membership

All Members are entitled to attend, speak and vote at the Annual Student Members' Meeting.

The President shall normally chair the meeting. Where the President is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, another elected Officer will chair the meeting.

Students' Union staff and invited guests may attend to provide advice or support but will not have voting rights unless they are also Student Members of the Students' Union.

Powers

The Annual Student Members' Meeting will:

- approve, amend or rescind Students' Union policy;
- debate matters affecting students and the work of the Students' Union;
- receive reports on the work of the Executive Committee and elected Officers;
- hold elected representatives to account for the delivery of Union policy;
- identify the priorities and aspirations that should inform the strategic direction and work of the Students' Union;
- establish Working Groups where appropriate;
- carry out the business required of the Annual Student Members' Meeting under Article 16.2 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association; and
- consider any other business brought before the meeting in accordance with this Bye-Law.

Meetings

The Students' Union will hold at least one Annual Student Members' Meeting during each academic year.

Meetings may be held in person, online or in a hybrid format to maximise participation and accessibility.

Members will be given reasonable notice of the meeting, together with details of the agenda and any motions to be considered.

Motions

Any member of the Students' Union, Student Voice body, recognised student group or affiliated society may submit a motion for consideration at an Annual Student Members' Meeting.

The Executive Committee will determine the process and timescales for the submission of motions and amendments and will publish these in advance of the meeting.

Decision Making

The Annual Student Members' Meeting will seek to reach decisions through open discussion wherever possible.

Where a vote is required, each Member will have one vote and decisions will normally be made by a simple majority of those voting, unless otherwise required by the Memorandum and Articles of Association or this Bye-Law.

Decisions made by Members are subject to the powers and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Quorum

The quorum for an Annual Student Members' Meeting will be 150 Members.

Where a meeting is not quorate, discussion may proceed but decisions requiring the approval of the membership will be deferred or conducted in accordance with Part 3 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

2.2. Student Member Meetings

Purpose

Student Members' Meetings provide opportunities for Members to come together between Annual Student Members' Meetings to consider unforeseen significant issues affecting UWS students and / or the Students' Union, exercise the powers provided for in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and make decisions where appropriate.

Membership

All Members are entitled to attend, speak and vote at a Student Members' Meeting.

The President shall normally chair the meeting. Where the President is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, another elected Officer shall chair the meeting.

Students' Union staff, University staff and invited guests may attend where appropriate to provide information, answer questions or contribute to discussion.

Powers

A Student Members' Meeting may:

- discuss unforeseen and / or significant matters affecting students and / or the Students' Union;
- question elected representatives in relation to the issue being discussed;
- hold votes of no confidence in President, Vice President of Education, Trustees (see Section 27-29 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association), Faculty Vice Presidents or Office Bearers;
- make recommendations to the Executive Committee;
- request that the Executive Committee take forward matters of concern;
- approve matters reserved to Members under the Memorandum and Articles of Association; and
- exercise any other powers conferred upon Members by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Calling a Student Members' Meeting

Student Members' Meetings may be called in accordance with Part 3 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Decision Making

Student Members' Meetings will seek to reach decisions by consensus wherever possible.

Where a vote is required, each Member will have one vote. Unless otherwise specified in the Memorandum and Articles of Association or this Bye-Law, decisions will be made by a simple majority of those present and voting.

Decisions made by Members are subject to the powers and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Quorum

The quorum for a Student Members' Meeting will be 150 Members.

Where a meeting is not quorate, discussion may continue, but any decisions requiring the approval of Members will be deferred until a quorate Student Members' Meeting or determined through another democratic process provided for in Part 3 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

2.3. Executive Committee

Purpose

The Executive Committee is responsible for implementing the policies agreed by Members, coordinating the Student Voice Framework and exercising the powers delegated to it under this Bye-Law.

Role

The Executive Committee will:

- provide leadership for the Students' Union's representative work;

- implement the policies agreed by Members;
- coordinate the work of the Student Voice Framework;
- consider recommendations from Members and Student Voice bodies;
- determine how recommendations should be progressed;
- establish and review Working Groups where appropriate;
- recognise Student Networks in accordance with this Bye-Law;
- agree allocation of campaign budgets;
- make recommendations to the Board of Trustees and the University where appropriate;
- monitor progress against Students' Union policy and agreed priorities; and
- report on progress to Members.

Membership

The membership of the Executive Committee will comprise:

- President (Chair);
- Vice President Education (Vice Chair);
- Three Faculty Vice Presidents;
- A representative elected by the Societies Forum:
- London Representative;
- Postgraduate Research Representative;
- Sustainability Representative;
- Women's Representative;
- Disabled Students' Representative;
- Black and Ethnic Minority Students' Representative;
- LGBTQ+ Students' Representative; and
- International Students' Representative.

The Chief Executive Officer and other Students' Union staff may attend meetings to provide advice and administrative support but will not have voting rights.

The Executive Committee may invite University staff or other individuals to attend meetings where appropriate.

Where the Executive Committee considers that additional representation would strengthen the diversity and inclusivity of student voice, it may co-opt additional student representatives for a specified purpose or period.

Meetings

The Executive Committee will normally meet at least six times during each academic year. Meetings may be held in person, online or in a hybrid format.

Decision Making

The Executive Committee will seek to reach decisions by consensus wherever possible. Where a vote is required, decisions will be made by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote.

The quorum for meetings of the Executive Committee will be determined by the Board of Trustees.

2.4. Faculty Forums

Purpose

Faculty Forums are open forums that enable students within each Faculty to discuss their academic experience, identify priorities and influence the work of the Students' Union and the University.

Role

Faculty Forums will:

- identify priorities for improving the academic experience;
- develop ideas, campaigns and policy proposals;
- receive updates on issues previously raised and actions taken;
- provide feedback to Student Officers; and
- strengthen community and belonging within each Faculty.

Recommendations arising from Faculty Forums may be referred to the Executive Committee, Working Groups or other appropriate bodies for consideration and action.

Membership

Faculty Forums are open to all Students' Union members studying within the relevant Faculty. The Faculty Vice President shall normally chair the Faculty Forum. The Forum may elect a Vice Chair from among its members to support the work of the Forum and chair meetings in the absence of the Faculty Vice President.

The Students' Union may also invite the President and / or Vice Presidents, Student Network representatives, society leaders and University staff to contribute where appropriate.

Meetings

Faculty Forums will normally meet at least twice during each academic year.

2.5. Campus Forums

Purpose

Campus Forums are open forums that bring together students to discuss and improve campus life, identify local priorities and influence the development of services, facilities and the wider student experience at each campus.

Role

Campus Forums shall:

- identify priorities relating to campus life and the student experience;
- discuss campus services, facilities and local issues affecting students;
- develop ideas and recommendations for improvement;
- receive updates on issues previously raised;
- strengthen communication between students, the Students' Union and the University; and
- refer recommendations to the Executive Committee or other appropriate bodies.

Membership

Campus Forums are open to all Students' Union members studying on the relevant campus.

Chairing

Campus Forums will normally be chaired by the President or Vice-President Education. Where neither is able to attend or continue chairing the meeting, another member of the Executive Committee may chair. The substitute Chair should be nominated in advance by the President or Vice-President Education where practicable or, where this is not possible, agreed by the members of the Executive Committee present.

Meetings

Campus Forums will normally meet at least twice during each academic year. University staff may be invited as required.

2.6. Societies Forum

Purpose

The Societies Forum brings together representatives from affiliated student societies to share good practice, identify opportunities for collaboration and contribute to the development of student life at UWS.

Role

The Societies Forum will:

- represent the interests of affiliated societies;
- encourage collaboration between societies;
- identify opportunities to strengthen student-led activity and belonging;

- develop ideas and recommendations relating to societies and the wider student experience;
- monitor the allocation of society funding;
- share good practice between societies; and
- refer recommendations to the Executive Committee or other appropriate bodies.

Membership

Membership will consist of representatives from affiliated student societies recognised by the Students' Union.

The Forum shall elect a Chair, who shall also serve on the Executive Committee in accordance with the Union's election procedures.

Students' Union staff may attend meetings to provide advice and administrative support but shall not have voting rights.

Meetings

The Societies Forum will normally meet at least twice during each academic year. Meetings may be held in person, online or in a hybrid format.

2.7. Student Networks

Purpose

Student Networks provide opportunities for students with shared identities, experiences or interests to come together, build community, champion equality and influence change within the Students' Union and the University.

Recognition

The Executive Committee may recognise Student Networks where there is sufficient student interest and the proposed network supports the aims and values of the Students' Union.

Recognised Student Networks may nominate members to participate in Working Groups or other Student Voice activities where appropriate.

Role

Student Networks may:

- represent the views and experiences of their members;
- identify barriers to equality, inclusion and participation;
- develop ideas, campaigns and recommendations for change;
- contribute to the development of Students' Union policy and priorities;
- work collaboratively with other Student Voice bodies where appropriate; and
- refer recommendations to the Executive Committee or other appropriate bodies.

Membership

Membership of Student Networks is open to any student who identifies with, supports or wishes to contribute to the aims of that Network.

Meetings

Recognised Student Networks will meet as required.

2.8. Working Groups

Purpose

Working Groups provide flexible opportunities for students to work together on specific projects, campaigns or areas of development that support the work of the Students' Union.

Establishment

The Executive Committee may establish a Working Group where it considers that a dedicated group would support the development of ideas, recommendations or projects.

The Executive Committee shall determine the purpose, membership and expected outcomes of each Working Group.

Role

Working Groups shall:

- consider specific issues or areas of work;
- gather evidence and student feedback;
- develop ideas, recommendations or proposals;
- support the delivery of agreed projects or campaigns; and
- report their findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee or other appropriate bodies.

Membership

Membership will be determined according to the purpose of the Working Group and should be open to students with an interest in the subject being considered. A representative from the Executive Committee will lead and chair these working groups.

The Executive Committee may invite Students' Union staff, University staff or external advisers to participate where appropriate.

Review

The Executive Committee shall periodically review Working Groups to ensure they continue to support the purpose for which they were established.

A Working Group may be concluded where its purpose has been fulfilled or is no longer required.

Review

Approving Body	Board of Trustees
Date of approval:	20 th August 2026